



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# AFGHANISTAN

## Agriculture

August 2006



PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

*A local farmer working in his vineyard. Grapes were once legendary in Afghanistan. Grape varieties that originated in Afghanistan are now being reintroduced by USAID's agriculture projects.*

### AGRICULTURE SNAPSHOT

- Over 580 km of farm-to-market roads and 820 km of irrigation canals and drains were rehabilitated
- Over 494,000 hectares of land improved irrigation
- \$5 million provided to help establish a micro-credit facility operating through a dozen sub-lenders in 77 districts.
- 350 veterinary field units covering most of the country provided 28 million vaccinations and treatments to livestock

### BACKGROUND

An estimated 80 percent of 29.9 million Afghans are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. However, two decades of conflict and a prolonged drought, destroyed irrigation systems and vineyards, and livestock numbers were greatly diminished. By the time the Taliban fell, many families were in debt to warlords and were unable to feed themselves. Since 2001, USAID has worked to restore the agriculture industry to ensure people were fed and had a means to earn a living. From June 2003 to 2005, the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by about 9 percent, and the country's total GDP grew by 4.4 percent.

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The purpose of USAID's agriculture program is to improve food security, increase agricultural productivity and rural employment, and improve family incomes and well being. Improved job opportunities and incomes also reduce pressures on the poor to grow opium poppy.

### RESTORING FOOD SECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

In early 2002, restoring food security was a top priority. Harsh climate conditions, land mines, bombs and general neglect had damaged or destroyed croplands and more than half of the roads, irrigation systems and storage facilities. USAID introduced better seed varieties and appropriate technologies to increase agricultural yields. More than 22,000 Afghans were employed to repair approximately 900 km of irrigation ditches which improved cultivation and generated incomes for farmers. Over 494,000 hectares of farmland received more water for crops. Given the perishable nature of these crops, the rough roads, and terrain in remote rural areas, farmers needed a way to preserve their harvests until they could sell them in markets. USAID rebuilt cold storage warehouses and roads linking farms to markets.

### HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO BOOST AGRICULTURAL MARKETS

In 2003, USAID shifted from addressing immediate humanitarian needs to encouraging the production of legitimately marketable crops. The goal was to help build a market-driven economy. With an increased water supply to more than 494,000 hectares of land, and the introduction of better seed varieties, farmers could once again harvest wheat, grapes, and pomegranates that were once legendary in this country. Refrigeration enables farmers to keep their produce fresh until they sell it at local markets or export it. USAID trained over one million farmers through seed and fertilizer demonstrations how to improve crop yields. Programs established dried fruit and nut processing plants, and provided marketing advice to expand trade opportunities.

Because many rural Afghans raise livestock, as well as, crops and fruits, USAID offered animal health training to boost the health of poultry and livestock. Nearly 350 veterinary field units covering most of the country provided 28 million vaccinations and treatments to livestock and poultry.



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# AFGHANISTAN

## Agriculture (continued)



*USAID financed agriculture specialist demonstrating grape trellising to farmers in Helmand.*



PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

*USAID's agriculture projects are introducing new, high-value crops, such as sunflower and canola.*



PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

*A refrigerated storage unit keeps Afghan fruits and vegetables fresh until they reach domestic markets or are exported abroad.*

### EXTENDING FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CREDIT

Afghan farmers need financing to revitalize the agricultural industry. In response to this challenge, USAID has helped restore basic banking and credit services, providing about \$5 million in micro-credit loans. Rural lenders administer the loans in 77 of the 380 districts. To date more than 28,000 loans have gone to small businesses, 75 percent of which went to women. The program's success encouraged commercial banks to extend revolving loans for agro-businesses. Seed money was provided for commercial leases and an equity investment fund promoted agro-processing and more crops for export.

### INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

USAID helps Afghans become more self sufficient while increasing agricultural productivity. Links between Kabul University's agriculture and veterinary schools and U.S. land grant universities allow technical specialists to share their expertise. By partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 25 technical advisors providing training and advise about livestock health, sanitation, rangeland management, forestry and biodiversity conservation. USAID also provided technical assistance to help reorganize the institutional framework of the Ministry of Agriculture to make it more responsive to farmers' needs. The formation of farmer associations, micro-credit, and trade organizations helps farmers sell their produce at local markets and export abroad for better prices.

### MOVING FORWARD

In the future, USAID will build on successes and lessons-learned while continuing to rehabilitate irrigation systems and farm-to-market roads; working to expand markets and linkages with private sector entrepreneurs; strengthening efforts in natural resource management and biodiversity conservation; improving rural financial systems; promoting new agricultural technology to improve crop yields; training the new generation of Afghan agricultural scientists and extension specialists; and building the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture to plan, implement and manage development programs. USAID will strengthen existing relationships with U.S. land-grant universities and expand alliances with new institutions to ensure Afghans have access to the latest science, technology and expertise. USAID strategies and programs will continue to be:

- Linked to market trends, at global, regional, national and local levels, and focused on improving competitiveness and efficiency;
- Aggressive with regard to improving natural resource management;
- Innovative and facilitating the development and use of science and technology; and
- Attentive to the needs and capabilities of Afghan farmers and herders, rural communities, vulnerable groups and marginalized people.